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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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The managerial millennium

By Kenneth Minogue

JUDITH A. MERKLE:
Management and Ideology
The Legacy of the International Scientific Management Movement
225pp. University of California Press, 1979.
\$20 03737 5

Frederick Winslow Taylor was the leading figure in a group of American engineers who from the 1880s onwards developed the principles of what they called "Scientific Management". In the public mind, this movement was imagined as men in white coats analysing the movements of factory workers with stop-watches and noting down the results on clip-boards. The workers hated the very thought of it, fearing any speeding up of what had often become a comfortable routine of life. In his *Principles of Scientific Management*, Taylor describes an "experiment" in which a German worker, there called Schmidt, cooperates with the system and becomes capable of leading forty-seven half-tons of pig iron a day, improving on the daily average of twelve half-tons per day which was the prevailing average at Bethlehem Steel which Taylor was reorganizing. The real facts of the case were obscure, but this kind of inspirational story helped Taylor to break down resistance of both bosses and workers to his proposal, and early in the new century they became the focus of a national cult of efficiency. This cult soon spread to other countries, most notably to the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks, who had earlier denounced the whole idea as a form of rapacious capitalist exploitation of the workers, took it up with all the enthusiasm of men in desperate circumstances, and it lay behind the early shock brigades in industry, and the later system of Stakhanovism. It was adopted by the French and the Germans, but had only a small and limited effect on the British.

Such is the story Judith Merkle has to tell in *Management and Ideology*. Those at all familiar with it tend to regard it as a minor episode in the history of modern management. It is Professor Merkle's contention that, far from being merely a set of techniques aimed at making factories more efficient, Taylorism was a fully fledged technocratic ideology, crusading for a new society. As such, it has had deep, lasting and often unrecognized effects on the way we live now. Taylor's ideas were not limited to worker efficiency. They were the inspiration, for example, of personal self-development as expressed in theories of positive thinking, and they grew a political wing which influenced both the politics and (more significantly) the administration of America and other countries. To combine history with a critical evaluation is a virtually impossible task, and it is a persistent problem of Professor Merkle's book, that the coherence of a historical account is often thrown to the winds in order to develop a critical point. The early pages are especially directionless, leaving the reader adrift without signposts as the author takes off on one or another of her sociological excursions. Nevertheless, *Management and Ideology* is an important book, and Professor Merkle manages to sustain her thesis — in so far as one can be entirely sure what that thesis is. Her last sentence catches precisely the rather tentative menace which is her characteristic tone: "Knowing the history of the International Scientific Management movement, it is difficult to judge how imminent and with what emotions we should expect the next industrial prophet: 'What she actually means is: Run, don't walk, to the nearest desert island'."

There are two particularly fascinating problems which face such an ambitious enterprise. The first is how to establish an identity for Taylorism amidst the centuries-long history of rationalization in industry. The very concept of labour itself is a prototype Taylorist idea which emerged from one strand of the Taylor movement, is nothing more (abstractly considered) than an exact application of this principle. There are similar problems as the stream of Taylorism feeds into the wider river of contemporary management technique. Taylor died in hospital, winding his watch, in 1915, and although there is a case for thinking of the early Thirties as the intellectual climax of the movement, most of what was distinctly Taylorian had already become lost to modernity. Taylor, it might well be thought, was no Marx, no ideological fountainhead, but an inspirational personality who merely gave new impetus to a familiar idea.

Professor Merkle's argument here is that the bundle of more efficient productive techniques promoted by Taylor, Gantt, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and the rest was distinctive in ways which its claim to scientific status conceals. It was hostile to unionism and any form of cooperation with the labour force itself, since the techniques of improvement were to be worked out from above, by a new class of specially trained expert. It is the emergence of this new class of white-coated college boys on which Professor Merkle lays most stress.

Further, Scientific Management simplified the operations of production in such a way that the heritage of skilled craftsmanship on which factories had long depended was often completely destroyed. That the Taylorians created a desert and called it productivity is perhaps the central charge she lays at the door of the movement. Its effects are still being felt, and it has caused, so the argument runs, the alienation from industry which has long been ascribed, wrongly, to the very process of industry itself.

Above all, Taylorism was explicitly propagated by its founder himself as a mental revolution which could solve all the problems of society at the turn of the century. Abundance would put an end to class conflict. Seen in these ambitious terms, Taylorism is indeed a fully fledged modern ideology (rather than merely a set of techniques which can serve any purpose). It stands on all fours with communism, nationalism, fascism and the other forms of salvation by social science which have dominated our century. And, like all ideologies, it lies at the service of a new

and vigorous class: the managers, whose rule will initiate a millennium. Taylorism is thus given a central place in generating that tradition of thought, also indebted to Polish and Italian sources, whose most famous exponent is the James Burnham of *The Managerial Revolution*.

The second problem is what to do with the claim that Taylorism was scientific management. Professor Merkle is understandably sceptical about this claim, but her argument is abged and never quite emerges with clarity. Much of the time she is content with one-line put-downs to the effect that the neutrality, objectivity and supposedly scientific character of Taylorism actually conceals political and ideological objectives. What she means by this is simply that Taylor was not merely supplying better means to other people's ends, but that he had ends of his own to promote. No doubt. But what is important to recognize in the first place is what Taylor himself actually meant by the claim.



He meant by it two things which are both, up to a point, justified by the usage of "scientific" prevalent in his time. First, he aimed to replace mere knack and know-how with rational principles. Second, his techniques could help in achieving any purpose, and producing any commodity, that might be chosen. So far as Taylor could see, everyone would benefit from his system: the consumer by abundance, the capitalist by greater profits, and the worker by higher wages. And, as the history of the United States above all has shown, Taylor was absolutely right. All these good things have happened. Further, it seems likely that

only some such crusading assault upon the self-protective devices workers had evolved to make their lives comfortable would have had all of these results. The hatred of Taylorism by most work-forces was partly a hatred of an exhausting speeding up of work from which the workers generally expected few benefits. But it was also a hatred of a process by which they lost control over what they were doing to a band of alien experts. The bosses felt just the same way. The Taylorians, like the utilitarian forebears whom they much resemble, were simple-minded rationalists who believed that a man had only to consult his reason to recognize the superiority of the new and efficient technique put before him. Hence the saga of Taylorian expansion became one of those melodramas in which progress is pitted against the forces of conservatism, reaction and superstition. The result was rather like Proust rewritten by Samuel Smiles.

In fact, of course, Taylorism was far from being the pure technical improvement its supporters claimed. The workers certainly had to trade off leisure against the possibility of making more money on piece rates. The skill of the craftsman was replaced by a sequence of exercises fit for idiots. It was not merely that this led to boredom and fractiousness in the factories, but also that the loss of skill was largely irreversible, and American industry (especially in the area of military technology) suffers from it to this day. And, especially when Taylorian methods were applied in the Soviet Union, the speeding up of work and the fulfilling of production norms were often achieved at fearful cost to the capital equipment.

It is by focusing on these considerations that Professor Merkle reduces the science of the Taylorians to a form of politics. She is not at all sensitive to the way in which the very term "science" has changed in the past century, and, in a notably ambiguous passage, she describes one of Taylor's experiments as being "falsified" when what she actually means is that it has recently been discovered to have been false. Similarly, her view of politics is the common one that politics happens whenever people quarrel about power or status. This common view looks like a discovery because it allows us to discover "politics" in all sorts of places we

don't normally expect, but the illumination thus gained is merely a verbal illusion. No one ever doubted that conflict frequently occurs, but it trivializes politics to identify it with conflict.

This central issue is best illuminated in Professor Merkle's comparison of a managerial bureaucracy with an electric can-opener. The problem is: Is Taylorism merely the tool of efficiency it pretends to be? Professor Merkle says it isn't because it brings values other than mere serviceable efficiency in its train. It is, she says, like an electric can-opener which only makes sense in terms of a modern style of life. She remarks of the metaphorical electric can-opener that "such a tool, purchased at the price of extreme specialization and a reduction of adaptability, makes a statement about the type of civilization in which it exists and, ultimately, about the social values of that civilization". But does it? The can-opener by itself tells us nothing except that the civilization used cans. How often, and in association with what values, cannot be known without other evidence. The word "ultimately", of course, usually signals an argument that won't quite come out right, and that seems to be the case here. Professor Merkle has been misled by the current clichés in epistemology which are forever smoking out the values supposedly concealed behind claims to science, objectivity and neutrality. The simple point is that the idea of a tool is an abstraction, and that an organization of human beings serving as a tool of efficiency is something even more remote from actuality: a metaphorical abstraction. Each of those human beings combining to compose the managerial bureaucracy has his or her own thoughts, inclinations and ends, and hence there is always much more happening than merely the enhancement of efficient production. One may be neutral about many things without being neutral about everything. Taylorism certainly has, as Professor Merkle argues, many of the characteristics of the American civilization of the late nineteenth century when it was born, and some of these came floating into the factories on the wings of technique. But there are important distinctions to be drawn between the values which happen to accompany techniques, and the values which a technique subverts.

The actual political stance with which Taylorism was entangled was articulated by H. L. Gantt. He denounced current American practices as "the debating society theory of Governments" and went on to explain that it meant deciding policy "not by demonstrated facts but by opinions; not according to the laws of physics, but by majority vote". Gantt thought that "Real democracy consists of the organization of human affairs in harmony with natural laws, so that each individual shall have an equal opportunity to function at his highest possible capacity". Until the people consent to such a change they will never attain to real democracy. It is no wonder that such simplicities should have so commended themselves to the Bolsheviks and the Fascists of the early part of the century.

Taylor and his followers are little to the modern taste. They lack subtlety; there's no poetry in them, or even interesting scandal; and for all their ideological clout, their manifestos never made the pulse race faster. They emerged unmistakably from the crudest strain of American rationalism, in which life consists in a succession of solutions to problems, and the unknown organization man is their appropriate descendant. Further, it is all too easy to stretch them on the rack of modern social science, especially Taylor himself, who suffered from nightmares, and invented bizarre machines to help him deal with them. Professor Merkle is more interested in explaining them than in understanding them. It is at this point that social science impedes historical understanding, for instead of trying to reconstruct

Skin and Television

Outside, the winding and unwinding dance,
Tonight the clouds drift like the terrible grey floaters,
The souls of unfortunates who have swollen with tears

To grey acres that drift over parched farmlands.
Touch could tell a different story:
Finger the seed with its waving corridors,

Its heaps of autumn leaves; the egg
Beats feather and cheeks in her hand.
And the outer dew lies over the grass like a cloth,

The fine sheet which all the people breathe.
The one shining cloth hung behind clouded windows.
As for myself, I love the three:

Rain-drenched girls in their luminous
It's a Knockout nylon uniforms, my own skin
Pulses with light because of their capering raptures.

The ancient dispirited snakes by lying
Sheepskin for them to glide on our elders
Are distracted from their blank tombs

By the phosphorescent stone that blurs out tales
Of guileless death. Admitted
That dandelion has granite dreams

Of the soil it yellows from, and the light
Cooles on beating, day and night,
Into the grey boulder dreaming of influence.

President like the white moon; but this other
Complex electrical tissue of rocks
Gives back a nylon sex-glimpse

Out of its hollow monochrome that stares for ever
Into the invisible waterfall of ether ceaselessly
Raining in white pictures all over us.

Peter Redgrove

the situation in which these vigorous and not entirely unimaginative men saw themselves and the problems they imagined they faced, she prefers to deploy an eclectic set of psychological and sociological theories to render them less opaque: the Protestant ethic, charisma, the search for father figures, cravings for status and a battery of religious metaphors are among the devices pressed into service.

Above all, they are seen as essentially middle-class. Professor Merkle expresses Taylor's vision of modern society as "split between two inimical classes, enviously quarrelling over the share of a meager industrial output both are too avaricious to increase". The professional middle classes have the redemptive role of bringing peace and abundance. But this statement of Taylor's view comes at the end of the book, and more commonly she takes a new class of parasites on the face of industry, insinuating themselves between bosses and men, and creating as much harm as benefit. Many members of the movement had, like Taylor himself, been compelled to leave college and go to work in factories for lack of money. It is no doubt common

for people to imagine, as Taylor and his followers seem to have done, that those above and those below them on some imagined social scale share desirable features, but the report of these imaginings cannot become the basis of a sociological explanation of a movement. In the United States, the "middle classes" are a remarkably fluid and unspecific class of people and thus no basis for a theory. This is enough by itself to render entirely null such curious remarks as: "Perhaps because his neuroses were the neuroses of an era, or rather, of a class within that era, Taylor's personal solutions to the problems of order and control were successfully writ large on American society itself." Sociopathology of this kind merely patronizes and diminishes people, while explaining nothing at all.

Management and Ideology is, however, an interesting piece of work on a subject of central importance. And for British readers, it has an additional interest. Taylorism never really got off the ground in Britain because it was no match for the cunning of labour in fending off more efficient organization. Professor Merkle recounts some familiar horror stories of British workmen being imported

with their machinery to the United States, only to be smartly sacked because they could not make it work profitably. She explains British imperialism by saying that "the antiquated class structure of Britain, with its stress on the cult of the amateur for the upper classes, and practical but humble expertise for the lower classes, proved to be a barrier to Taylorism". Her fundamental explanation however is that "Without technocrats of uncertain social origins, there was no group whose greatest interest lay in the propagation of Scientific Management as a profession". The British industrial situation is thus seen as one in which management confronted labour without an intervening stratum of managerial experts, and this has led on to British management decline. Whatever one's view of the cause may be, there is little doubt about the decline. There is thus an interesting and unresolved tension between Professor Merkle's account of the cost to Britain of resisting efficient management, and her general thesis that Taylorism is a hydra-headed monster, difficult to get rid of, and of doubtful benefit to the modern world.



"The Pigott débacle", as the official historians of the Times called it, rendered from the paper's publication in 1887 of a series of articles on "Parnell and Crime" which based their argument on a number of letters, purportedly written by Charles Parnell. These letters proved that the Irish nationalist leader helped to plot the Phoenix Park murders in 1882. While a judicial commission was investigating the affair, the purveyor of the letters, Richard Pigott, committed suicide, leaving behind a confession which confirmed the letters as forgeries. The cartoon, first published in Punch, is taken from the book reviewed opposite.

The strident scalpel

By J. F. Watkins

RICHARD SELZER:

Mortal Lessons

216pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.50.
0 7011 2558 6

Richard Selzer is an American surgeon. His book is a collection of twenty-four pieces called "essays", although they could more accurately be called prose poems. In some he celebrates the liver, the stomach, the kidneys, the ureters, the bladder, the intestines, the hair, and, briefly, the spleen; in others he tells anecdotes about some of his surgical experiences. The last piece is a diatribe against pathologists, whom he hates, and whose activities he appears not to understand—a strange inadequacy in a surgeon. From the evidence presented in this book I would diagnose his condition as Stupor et Horror Corporis, complicated by Chronic Euphoria, and aggravated, I suspect, by a distal too rich in alkali. Whitman, Thomas Carlyle, and the kind of advertiser's prose to be found in glossy magazines.

There is no reason why a man's Muse should not be awakened just as effectively by the viscera as by skylarks, nightingales, Cicero, Mrs. Whitman, weddings, and other commonplace of human experience. All that matters is what the Muse does when she is aroused. Dr Selzer's Muse, for much of the time, bellows straightforward bits of anatomical and clinical information bedecked with every kind of literary excess: the kidneys, for example, "wear, with Napoleonic panache, the tricornered hat of the adrenal gland." This is inaccurate. The kidneys do not share a hat, they have one each; Napoleon did not wear his hat with panache, and it was not three-cornered. Selzer's exuberance of mind has betrayed him. A few more examples of the style may be of use.

Bones. "Bones. Two hundred and eight of them. A whole glory turned and looted. Lb. the timbered femur all hung and strapped with bone." Bone, lb. bone, is the pit of a man after the pumbeared flesh has been eaten away.

Skin. "Gaze upon the skin as I have, through a microscope brightly and tremble at the wisdom of God, for here is a magic disc to suit all seasons." And, when heartbroken portraits surveying his embattled skin, would not volunteer for an unanesthetized flaying could it but rid him of his pink sequins: his silver spangles.

Vomiting of Pregnancy. "For what should be, from that secret soft sublimist slippage of the moorings until the splashing of the shocker a three-quarter-year sojourn upon serene seas, becomes an ungainly lurch from basin to pot."

The stomach: "Belly dwells a prisoner, fed or starved as suits his janitor, at whose whim he is bludgeoned by leaden dumpings, or is with harshest horse-dish seared."

Baldness: "O Scalp, Scalp, wilt thou not bleed, not scream from this murderous depilation? Behold, thou art scythed and give no sign save a silence from nape to brow."

Dr Selzer is very different from the average surgeon, for whom a liver is a liver, and nothing more. In his perception the liver has "the shape of Diana's helmet" and "weighs in at three to four pounds." Most of his liver poem deals, fairly accurately, with alcoholic cirrhosis, and may be of help to worried business men. He is surely wrong, however, when he says that the liver is turned to a "mass of fatty globules by a double martini." At least, it is to be hoped that he is wrong.

In the course of their careers medical practitioners see more horrors than the layman ever dreams of. Like many of his colleagues, Selzer sees the world as a "hell in which we wage our lives", and his anecdotes describe, in detail, four of the nastier corners of that hell. The details are accurate, but perhaps too lovingly drawn. There is a faint, uncomfortable relish detectable in his story of the woman who re-opened her abdominal incision in order to explore her own viscera, and in his accounts of amputations, and unsuccessful operations for cancer. One vignette describes a husband feeding his wife through a gastrostomy tube. She is dying of a particularly unpleasant cancer of the neck which has blocked her oesophagus, but the intended effect, of loving care somehow transforming and alleviating a horrible situation, does not come off. We have only a harrowing account of a private anguish which should not be seen by prying eyes. The reader is left with a feeling of guilt, similar to the guilt which some, at least, of the spectators must have when they move away from a messy traffic accident.

The pornography of death is as alluring, and as corrosive, as any other pornography, and Selzer is an enthusiastic practitioner of the art. He is, I believe, a soul in torment. "You may think," he seems to say, "that life, for all its tragedies, is, for most people, too unpleasant. I will show you how filthy it really is." I cannot believe, however, that all his operations ended in ghastly failure; some, at least, of his patients must have walked out of the hospital in better condition than they were in on admission. Selzer's attitude, to his work, like that of many, perhaps all, surgeons, is tinged with sadism. A man who does not, in his depths, enjoy cutting flesh could never endure the physical and mental strain of being a surgeon. In "The Knife" he sees himself as a priest dressed in mask and gown instead of surplice and cassock. Sexual imagery is not far away. "The flesh splits with its own kind of orgasm. It is like the penetration of a knife. It is the expression of this kind of surgical excitement that will make the book a

success among readers conditioned by our best contemporary writers and by their inferior brethren in the media to long for the stimulation of representations of violence and sexual activity. In these respects the book is very much a manifestation of the decaying literary culture of our time.

One anecdote stands out from all the rest, and is a small masterpiece, written, presumably, while Selzer's exhausted Muse was asleep. In "Tillim" he describes, simply, and without hysterical extravagance, a minor operation on a Jewish boy for an ingrowing toe-nail. The boy's father, a devout, Orthodox survivor of Hitler's massacres, is present at the operation to give strength to his son. If all the pieces in the book had the quality of this one, Selzer would have to be recognized as a writer of the first rank. One out of twenty-four is a higher score than most of us could achieve, so there is hope for him, if only he can come to terms with his Jacobean obsession with mortality and decay. In strictly statistical terms the great majority of people will not have to endure the horrible deaths delineated by Selzer, whose sensitive nature has been warped by the awful things he has seen.

This extraordinary book, although it exasperates, is not negligible. There is nothing in Selzer's literary condition that could not have been cured by an hour's consultation with, for example, Dr Leavis or Dr Eliot. Although those eminent practitioners are dead they have left behind text-books which can be of great help to the afflicted. Even the treatises of the late Dr Quiller-Couch may still be of value in this sort of case. *Mortal Lessons* can be recommended to medical students in search of more colourful accounts of anatomy than are to be found in the standard manuals. It will be a valuable source of texts for the examiners in the Cambridge English Tripos. Members of the general public will enjoy much of it, but should be warned that it may drive them to suicide.

Mugging as a Social Problem, by Michael Pratt (236pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £11.95, 0 7100 054 1) is a detailed study of the phenomenon of mugging, or "robbery of personal property in the open following sudden attack". The author, a principal in the Criminal Investigation Department at New Scotland Yard, has applied the techniques of sociological analysis to a random sample of over 1,000 muggings which occurred in the Metropolitan Police District in the mid-1970s, and set them against a background of "social determinants" such as ecology, deprivation and race. Suggesting short-term and long-term steps which could be taken to remove the conditions which create muggings, and to reduce the risk of being mugged (the incidence of the crime is currently doubling in London at the rate of one every four or five years), Michael Pratt provides an insight into the background motives and methods of the typical mugger.

Hands, then, is not a definitive book, nor is it the fluff his publishers seem to think it is, with their unworthy list of questions on the cover: "Did you know that South American Monkeys have fingerprints on their tails? It is often a provocative book, in the very best sense of forcing our thought along new lines. For example, designers would be well advised to read the section on 'Prehensile Patterns in Primates'. Here Professor Napier clearly demonstrates, with specific reference to a hand-held sander, that many tools are very badly designed, with little knowledge of the hand's capabilities, and its weaknesses.

Another of the book's strengths is its description of the anatomy of hands, written accessibly, this convincingly establishes the structural links which the human hand has with primates. However, it is confusing to suggest that the human hand's capability is primitive while at the same time, asserting its central role in human evolution. The delicate control we possess, as Napier points out, certainly a product of our nervous system, but one cannot adduce the same arguments to explain

size the hand's antecedents and thereby conclude it to be primitive. The hand could equally well say that our nervous system was primitive—and be mistaken.

The author's sure grip of his subject also falters when he discusses the social implications of gesture, a topic better covered by other writers, including recently Desmond Morris in *Mankind*. Nor is his treatment of "hand-ness" convincing. Primates, we are told on very shaky evidence, are left-handed, though humans opt for the right. But the whole question of bilateral asymmetry in form, function, and behaviour, is one of the major problems of biology, and with Napier had spent this out, and spent longer on the implications of such gaps in our knowledge. If we cannot account for asymmetry—on the face of it a very simple developmental problem—though actually a very difficult one—we should be very careful before applying behavioural theory concerning simpler primates to our own species.

The book is well illustrated, with excellent photographs of the hand in action. Particularly commendable is the attempt that has been made to show the hand in use by dancers, for example, or workmen, so as to reveal just how extensive its "grammar" is. A less sure use is made of reproductions from Dürer, Michelangelo, and Velázquez. These are splendid to look at, but to be asked to compare the hand sculpted with the hand as painted with a few lines may strike art lovers as presumptuous, or comic, and leave other readers mystified. There are signs too of a poor editing, another common defect in specialist books. Here we have "Function of the Hand" separated by thirty pages from "Tool Using and Tool Making", the paragraph being completed by a chapter on "Primate Hands and Fossil Hands".

These, however, are minor blemishes on a sturdy workmanlike book, which brings together the threads of what we know about hands. It provides many points of departure for artists, physicians, criminologists and designers, and can be read with pleasure by others too. There is a useful bibliography.

STEPHEN KOSS:

The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain
Volume 1: The Nineteenth Century
455pp. Hamish Hamilton. £20.
0 241 10561 7

In Frederick Knight Hunt's *The Fourth Estate*, published in 1850, the author argued that a country's social progress and civil liberty could be judged by the number of its newspapers. "When journals are numerous," he wrote, "the people have power, intelligence, and wealth; where journals are few, the many are in reality mere slaves." If he was right, there must indeed be good cause for anxiety today. A much commented political press now has to compete for influence with radio and television, while journalistic freedom is threatened by an increasing tendency to monopoly in press ownership. At such a time a major historical study of the British political press could hardly be more opportune, and the quality of Stephen Koss's first volume suggests that the completed (two-volume) work may well become a classic.

Though barely forty, Professor Koss already has an impressive list of publications to his name, and two biographies—those of Sir John Brunner and A. G. Gardiner—have a direct relevance to his present subject. (Brunner was a rich radical who, in the 1880s, put money into the *Star* and was, as a result, nicknamed "the Star-spangled Brunner". Gardiner appears towards the end of this volume taking over the editorship of the *Daily News*, but will feature more prominently in the next.) Koss has decided to begin where Arthur Aspinall's *Politics and the Press* left off, that is to say in 1850, and the first volume takes us to the launching of Joseph Chamberlain's *Tariff Reform* campaign in 1903. The story opens, therefore, with the final emancipation of the press through the removal of discriminatory fiscal burdens, and ends with its popularization at the hands above all, of Alfred Harmsworth (soon to be Lord Northcliffe).

The author's technique is chronological rather than thematic. He is not one of those "historians" who disdain narrative and write about the past in the manner of social scientists. Though he provides plenty of analysis and evaluation, he does so as he goes along, keeping us constantly aware of the ticking clock. With a subject so large and diffuse it is, of course, exceptionally hard to achieve narrative clarity, and there are moments when the sheer accumula-

tion of names—of papers, owners, editors and contributors—becomes rather bewildering. But on the whole Koss succeeds in telling us his complex story in a way that we can follow, and with proper reference to the general political history of which it is part. Moreover his writing is always shrewd and lively, is often witty as well. His view of personalities and institutions tends to be irreverent, and he clearly sees no reason to make an exception in favour of the press.

What does he mean by the "political press" which, on his argument, once rose but has now fallen, or is falling? Without attempting any precise definition, he suggests that its chief characteristic was "a tacit acceptance of Parliament as the supreme political and social institution of the realm". It was thus a by-product of the golden age of parliamentary government, when the political nation, much expanded though still restricted, was a natural forum, as it were, for serious political controversy. There is enough trust in this concept to justify the use that Koss is making of it, though he would be the first to admit—indeed, his book demonstrates—that it is only very roughly true. The British voting and newspaper-reading public during the second half of the nineteenth century was not all that different from the mass electorate and "admass" of today. The late Victorians had many other interests besides politics, and were capable of finding politics very boring. Even John Morley could complain to W.T. Stead, in 1881, that the issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was "infinitely too stiff and crammed with politics"; and by the following decade, Koss tells us, "top-ranking parliamentarians, who had been used to receiving in the press the equivalent of the columns they filled in *Hansard*, were fortunate to secure abbreviated reports of their speeches".

All the same, the press undoubtedly was far more orientated towards politics, and devoted far more of its space to Parliament, from the age of Palmerston to that of Lloyd George—even to that of Baldwin—than at any time since the Second World War (apart from a few isolated episodes such as the Suez crisis). But was it true, as Prince Albert said to Disraeli, that the country was "governed by newspapers"? On Koss's evidence, it was not. As a general rule, the press seems to have followed rather than led public opinion, and its influence upon politicians to have derived more from its receptiveness to the public than from any force inherent in itself. During the period of Liberal ascendancy, the press was mainly Lib-

eral; when the country went Conservative in 1874, the bulk of the metropolitan press went Conservative; at the end of the century, when Unionism was predominant, the press was overwhelmingly Unionist. Such influence as newspapers could have upon public opinion was more likely to be exerted through the dissemination of news than by any process of editorial advocacy. *The Times* did not dare to oppose the Crimean War at the outset, but the dispatches which it published from its correspondent William Howard Russell "turned a mood of euphoria into one of disillusionment". It was on the strength of these dispatches that Abraham Lincoln said—appropriately enough, to Russell—"The London *Times* is one of the greatest powers in the world; in fact, I don't know anything which has more power, except perhaps the Mississippi".

Politicians naturally tend to flatter newspapermen, because it suits them to have plenty of favourable attention from the press. Newspapermen tend to make up to political leaders, partly because they are attracted by the glamour of office, and partly because they hope to obtain exclusive information. Ideally, the two fraternities should have much to do with each other, while preserving a certain wariness and distance. The outstanding press figure during the period covered in this volume was John Thaddeus Delane, editor of *The Times* for thirty-three years from 1841 until his death in 1877. Like C.P. Scott, perhaps the greatest figure of the next period, he became editor in his twenties—as a result of family connection. Delane was a good picker of men, but above all he knew how to maintain his own essential independence, and with it that of his paper. Though he was on close terms with some political leaders, notably Palmerston, he was always capable of biting the hand that fed him; and when, in 1861, Palmerston offered him the post of permanent under-secretary at the War Office, he refused it. Another friend was Disraeli, but *The Times* did not support him during his first premiership, and during his second backed him only up to a point, turning against him and supporting Gladstone on the issue of Turkish atrocities.

It was typical of Delane to say, early in his career, that he did not like being flattered by Disraeli, except that it pleased him that Disraeli thought him of sufficient importance to be worth flattering. It was equally typical of him that he was "one of the few notables who refused to sit for the cartoonists of *Vanity Fair*. During his editorship the

independence of *The Times* was further emphasized by the fact that its proprietor, John Walter, did not, unlike several other newspaper owners, accept a title from the State. Towards the end of the century the number of "honours" for the press increased, and in Koss's next volume the proliferation will be even more marked. (Always an unhealthy symptom, it is sadly in evidence again today.)

What happened in *The Times* in the years following the death of Delane shows, perhaps better than anything else, how much newspapers depended—as to a large extent they always will depend—upon individuals. No paper had a stronger institutional position than *The Times*, yet its reputation plummeted. Delane's immediate successor, George Newnes, was a scholarly man, fluent in Arabic, but not a man of the world and without flair. Disraeli asked if he was "versed in social diplomacy like Mr. Delane", and he was soon apparent that he was not. He did not last long, however, and was succeeded by G. E. Buckle, another scholar, under whom the worst mistake in the history of *The Times* (with the possible exception of its appeasement policy in the 1930s) was committed. This was the publication, in 1887, of articles designed to implicate Parnell in the Phoenix Park murders—articles based on letters that had been bought by the paper, one of which was reproduced in facsimile. Parnell denied the charge and in due course was dramatically vindicated, when the letters turned out to be forgeries. The whole affair cost *The Times* more than £200,000 in money, and the cost in reputation was incalculable. It is hard to believe that such a thing could ever have occurred under Delane's editorship.

During the Victorian period the overlap between journalism and the House of Commons was greater than it

is today. Robert Lowe combined being a leader-writer for *The Times* with being a very active MP. Indeed, at one stage of his career he was contributing regularly to the paper while serving as a minister. John Walter (the Third) sat in the House of Commons as Member for Nottingham, and later for Berkshire. Sir George Newnes, a key figure in British press history, was an MP for ten years. C.P. Scott got into Parliament in 1895, after three unsuccessful attempts. John Morley, Henry Labouchere and T.P. O'Connor were among others who were prominent in both spheres simultaneously. Alfred Harmsworth, however, stood for Parliament as a young man (at Portsmouth), only to be humiliatingly defeated. "The self-styled Tribune of the 'ordinary man' finished his third place, behind two Gladstonian Liberals, at a time when the forces of Gladstonianism were elsewhere in retreat." Koss suggests that his reverse may have hurt his vanity more than he cared to admit, and so in some measure have determined his later attitude towards the traditional political establishment.

The book is full of amusing touches and curious details. Who would have imagined, for instance, that in the 1865 general election the *Daily Telegraph* gave ardent support to a Christian Socialist standing at Lambeth? (Unlike Mr Ted Knight, he won—though nominally as a Liberal—and the *Telegraph* applauded his victory as an assertion of the principle of "men and not money"). Twelve years later the *Telegraph's* proprietor, Edward Lawson, had a punch-up with Labouchere on the steps of the Beefsteak Club, because Lawson had deserted Gladstone and was being venomously attacked for doing so by Labouchere in *Truth*. Relations between some top newspapermen may nowadays be equally uncordial, but they seem reluctant to express themselves so robustly.

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Ely House, 37 Dover Street, London W1X 4HQ

An Emblem

Someone has nailed a lucky horse-shoe beside my door while I was out—or is it a loop of rubber? No: it's in two sections. They glide about, silently undulating two slugs in a circle, tall to snout.

The ends link up: it's a shiny quail of rippling slug-flesh, thick as a snake, liquorice-black against the white pain of a pair of wetly-naked od. tubes. It doesn't seem quite right to watch what kind of love they'll make.

But who could resist? I'll compromise and give them a little time alone to nuzzle each other, slide and ooze into conjunction on their own, surely they're experts, with such bodies, each a complete erogenous zone—self-lubricating, swelling smooth and boneless under grating skin.

Ten minutes, then, for them to writhe in privacy, to either in position, to arrange each little tapered hose-pipe around the other.

All right, now, slugs, I'm back! time's up. And what a pretty coupling I find! They're swinging from the wall by a rope of glue, spun out of their combined mucus and anchored at the top. It lets them dance, intertwined, formally perfect like some emblem, heraldic serpents coiled in a twist.

But just in case their pose may seem immodest or exhibitionist (they've dressed themselves in a cloud of foam; a frothy veil for love-in-a-mist.

Fleur Adcock



The artist as onlooker

By F.S.L. Lyons

BRUCE ARNOLD:

Orpen
Mirror to an Age
448pp. Cape. £16.
0 224 01581 8

To rescue an artist, any artist, from oblivion is a difficult undertaking and when the oblivion is in a measure self-inflicted the task is harder still. Oblivion may seem a harsh term to use of William Orpen who, when he died in 1931 in his fifty-third year (apparently from alcoholic poisoning on top of other illnesses), was the most fashionable, and the wealthiest, portrait painter of his day. But this success, which came to him in his final decade, was precisely the kind from which posterity averts its embarrassed gaze. There was, therefore, a job of rehabilitation to be done and in *Orpen: Mirror to an Age* Bruce Arnold has addressed himself to it with immense energy and verve.

He brings many gifts to the work. Himself a man of several careers — art historian, novelist, political journalist — he is well-equipped to understand both the many-sidedness of Orpen and the loneliness and unhappiness which his fragmented personality eventually caused him. Mr Arnold knows the period intimately, has made a thorough study not only of Orpen's painting but of that of his chief contemporaries and writes an assured and beautifully uncluttered prose. His book is admirably organized and while the tone is intended to be persuasive it is never stridently so. He does not take the reader by the lapels to shake him into agreement, but simply walks him over the ground, letting him look at painting after painting in the confidence that to see — or at least to see through Bruce Arnold's eyes — is to be convinced. Not everyone will discern greatness quite so often as he does; but I would be a curiously reader who would not admit at the end of the journey that there was more to Orpen than the casual neglect of recent years has accustomed us to believe.

Orpen was an infant prodigy, but unlike many such, whose art fate is simply to grow up, he went on to become one of the most technically accomplished painters of his generation, with a particular ability to depict the human form in all its variety. This led him almost from the beginning into portraiture, but right up to and during the First World War (when he served as a war artist) he really lived a double life, as a painter of official likenesses and as a painter of imaginative works which were often dramatic and occasionally in the later paintings and drawings especially, symbolic. Arnold calls him a romantic realist and though such labels don't usually get us very far, this does at least help to put Orpen into context.

After winning all before him at the

Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin, he went on to do the same at the Slade in one of its great periods, where he profited from the teaching of, among others, Henry Tonks and Philip Wilson Steer. What he learnt at the Slade he forthwith applied to his own work and though there was of course development and increasing maturity in that work he is remarkable for having settled into his characteristic style at an early age and for having departed relatively little from that style thereafter. He was his own man and remained largely untouched by the various modern movements of his lifetime. No doubt this finally told against him in the eyes of his critics, but there is little evidence that Orpen felt himself diminished. One might almost say, indeed, that just as in his last years he was fashionable in the wrong way, in his early and middle periods he was unfashionable in the right way. Arnold does well to remind us of the power and vision of, for example, "The Mirror" (which is the cover illustration of the book), "The English Nurse", "The Bedroom" and, later, of the marvelous "serfs inspired by Lottie; the washerwoman of Paradise Walk, to say nothing of "The Red Scarf" and "controversial in its day — the erotic nude, "A Woman".

Arnold is naturally concerned to write the life of Orpen the man as well as of Orpen the painter. As in all cases where the artist is absorbed by his calling, and Orpen was a compulsive worker, the two were virtually indistinguishable. However, he was also a complicated human being who could inspire devotion, but whom it was not at all difficult to dislike. He is, in fact, a

challenge to the biographer in a way which Arnold defines uncompromisingly at the start: "Is it possible to treat seriously a man who called himself 'Ickle Orp'?" What warmth and humanity can be detected behind the dapper clothes, the polished, handmade shoes, the Stetson hat, and the jaunty, self-confident air with which he set out regularly at nine o'clock each morning for his studio? What does one make of the Rolls Royce queuing up in Orpen's heyday as society's portrait-painter? How can an artist have grandeur when he stands only five feet two inches tall, behaves like a clown, looks like a goat, and talks like a mischievous child?

"This book answers these questions with superb self-confidence. It does so not only through the author's sensitive approach to Orpen's painting, but still more through his appreciation of the many strands in the artist's personality. He could be reserved, but he could also be hilarious. He was ugly and intensely conscious of his lack of inches, yet he was immensely attractive to women and at one time maintained simultaneously his precarious marriage, his liaison, scandalous, perhaps, but never really dangerous, with Evelyn St George, and a tender affair with Yvonne Aubrey (the beautiful model for the two war-time pictures called "The Refugee"). He scorned spelling and syntax, but wrote marvellous letters and an account of his experiences at the front. An *Onlooker* in France, which is rightly recognized as being, together with his war-time paintings and drawings, a testament, not indeed of youth, but of harrowed middle age.

The decline of science fiction

started when in places of plots and brains sex raised its old hat over heels magnificent spacemen in their flying suits ripped off and up to some old tricks vaster than empires and more slow in foreign parts, black holes and asteroids whereon effects of zero-gravity leading to levity, the big bang theory

while alien life forms watched and wondered what was taking shape (like kiddears in claddie killing mummy? or granddads in how culture-shocking!) the hippopotamus was frightened small chance of intervention forbidden by galactic councils or average finding nobler things to do and cruder robots never saw

they have their own techniques by alone alone delete their bodies think wholly indeed they merge like Milton's angels (obscure) find none of membrane, joint or limb. Who are the monsters now? here was the decline and fall of it, science and fiction caused again by sex, all art's ruinous curse of the scientist.

D. J. Enright

He was almost unique among Irishmen in distrusting his conversational powers — he often drew himself listening open-mouthed to what went on around him — but he had, when he chose, the gift of forceful and sometimes extremely rude expression.

Above all, as the author rightly points out, he was an outsider in both England and Ireland and this gave him a disenchanted but acute perception of each country. He was, in fact, of Anglo-Irish stock, the son of a Dublin Protestant solicitor and accustomed from birth to move in a small, rather exclusive community which had civilized values and the means to maintain them, but was not in the mainstream of either English or Irish life. True, during the Edwardian decade some members of this Anglo-Irish minority did seek to create a fusion of cultures in Ireland and the resulting renaissance (or "renaissance" as Mr Arnold spells it) did for a brief period make Dublin an exciting place to live in. Orpen at that time spent part of every year in Ireland and he therefore saw the "movement" in full spate. But his attitude towards it seems to have been to borrow his later phrase, that of "an onlooker". He knew most of those involved but it is significant that the two to whom he was most closely attached — George Moore and Hugh Lane — were men who, like himself, had reputations far beyond the reach of the Dublin malice which their eminence inevitably attracted.

Arnold seems to share some of his hero's ambivalence towards the Irish renaissance. At one level he appears to take it seriously but at another level he is refreshingly iconoclastic about it. It

"Homage to Manet", begun in 1906 and finished in 1909, took William Orpen longer to paint than any other of his canvases. The final version of the painting (on the right) which depicts George Moore reading a paper to Edouard Manet beneath the figure of Venus to the two earlier studies shown on the left and alters the position of Moore's audience, which comprises D. S. MacColl standing behind Walter Sickert, and Philip Wilson Steer seated with his hands on the table next to Hugh Lane and Henry Tonks. The pictures are taken from the book reviewed here.

was indeed a smaller, more trivial stage than the thesis-mongers and the town industry have conditioned us to believe. That said, however, Arnold, looking at it from Orpen's standpoint, is led into rather extreme positions. Anyone who has an inkling of the hard labour Yeats and Lady Gregory had to undertake simply to keep the Abbey Theatre afloat (to say nothing of their other enterprises) will be surprised to learn here that their efforts "usually had the inevitable and fatal side effect of ensuring that the pressure for action was diverted into talk". Nor does the verdict on Yeats that "as a thinker he was really a silly man who wrote divinely" quite exhaust the subject. It would be about as valid to say of Orpen that as a speaker he was a hopelessly inarticulate man who wrote divinely, and I doubt if Arnold would accept that as an adequate judgment. In short, if his section seems the least successful in the book, it may be because the Irish renaissance was largely irrelevant to Orpen and he is it is the irrelevance which the biography faithfully conveys.

The book is handsomely produced and, given the large number of illustrations, the publishers have done well to keep its price to £16. While one can never have enough colour plates, it is a bonus to be given twice so many pen-and-ink drawings from such a master of the art. What a pity, though, that there is not a proper list of illustrations to save the reader from having to hunt through the index, and how frustrating only to be told in some instances and not in others where the paintings are at the present time. This study arouses fresh interest in Orpen, as it deserves to do, people will want to know where to go to see the pictures and this is not as clear as it should be. As for the text, it has been well researched and achieves a high standard of accuracy, with very few slips. They include Brazenose for Brazenose, Count Plunkett for Countess, and the substitution of Walter Long (not "St. Walter", incidentally) for James Joyce as Chief Secretary for Ireland between 1905 and 1907. But these are trifles and detract not at all from a vivid and compelling narrative which carries the reader along at a tremendous pace. Like him or leave him, Orpen has at last attracted a major biography. Does he deserve it? I think so. Arnold can rest assured that he has made his case.

Whoring after strange gods

By Oswyn Murray

GORE VIDAL:

Creation.
510pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
434 82969 2

Cyrus Spitama is an old man in a dry mouth, waiting for rain; if he was not at the hot gates, he has been almost everywhere else. Now blind and near death in Persia in the 440s BC, he listens for nearly six hours to that "self-styled historian", Herodotus, giving his mendacious account of the so-called Persian Wars, and resolves to dictate to his nephew Democritus, future inventor of the atomic theory, the far truer and more remarkable story of the eastern lands that were his life.

Born of the marriage of a Persian gentleman to a Greek courtesan, he is the grandson of Zoroaster and the sole witness of the sage's violent death at the hands of northern nomads. He is brought up at the court of Darius, Great King, King of Kings, King in Persia, king of countries, by the favour of Ahuramazda, the Aryan, the Achaemenian; his schoolfriends are the king's son, Xerxes, and Mardonius, future general against the Greeks, with whom he visits such famous sights as the temple broths of Babylon. Darius sends him as ambassador to establish peace with India, by the future sea route of Alexander the Great, to the Indus and Gandhara, and finally to the Ganges valley kingdoms. He converses with Brahmins and Jains, and acquires an Indian wife, daughter of Ajatashatru; he meets the octogenarian Buddha; and is much impressed, though he finds him difficult to understand.

Of other predecessors Vidal seems less aware. His novel is essentially didactic, a massive enterprise in world education, based on detailed and accurate antiquarian knowledge. It is also permeated with irony, the irony of an eternal outsider, who views all religions from the vantage point of a Zoroastrianism in which he only half believes. Such irony and such irony belong to a different age, to the eighteenth-century enlightenment. For the irony we may compare Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* and their many imitators; for the didacticism the closest parallel is provided by the most famous educational novel of the age, in its day translated into most of the polite languages and now utterly unread, the *Voyage de jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* of the Abbé Barthélémy. Cyrus, grandson of Zoroaster, making the American Grand Tour of the gurus of the East, is a reincarnation of the earnest Anacharsis, descendant of the Scythian sage, who made the same Grand Tour of the sources of the Enlightenment in fourth-century Greece.

The aged Abbé himself mirrors in reality the fictional Cyrus. Hiding in the house of Cloyneau Choussier in 1792-3, he writes his lonely memoirs: the style of Rousseau's *Confessions*; once keeper of the Royal Library and librarian of the Académie des Inscriptions, the old man knows only that his words can no longer serve as in former times to crown his career, and to ease his successor's first task, the composing of an obituary memoir for the Comptes-rendus of the Académie; for the Académie, like the rest of the Abbé's world, will never exist again. "In this inactivity to which my ill and the course of history condemn me, in an abode where I am the image of the greatest virtues above the image of the greatest vices, I begin in haste and without sorrow, to record the principal circumstances of my life." It is these hidden depths of resonance, as we sense the attempts of succeeding generations to understand their place in history, which give Vidal's often superficial novel its unexpected power. And in old age all men are equal: they must cultivate their gardens.

As the Abbé bids farewell to Anacharsis after six long volumes, he makes him say: "In my youth I sought happiness among the nations of the enlightenment; in old age I have found rest among a people who knows only the benefits of nature." Vidal's vision is of enlightenment as a quest for wisdom, not wisdom; yet his methods are the same. He is exploring the vision of Karl Jaspers, who proclaimed the first millennium BC "the axial age", the age of the great religious insights: Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Ezra and Aeschylus could all have met (at least if we choose our chronology with care). The chief characters in Vidal's novel are not the great religions themselves, but the great religions themselves, as they account towards the east, ignoring the western religious truths. The Greeks are travestied: Pythagoras is mentioned only for his bean tabu; Aeschylus is the author of that lyric play *The Persians*, Socrates a young

the Great King. Though Vidal nowhere gives this vital information, I reckon Cyrus must be on about seventy quarts a day, plus about 150 quarts of flour and a couple of sheep. But no novelist would ever dare to invent the truth about the Persian treasury, where an economic crisis meant that not enough food could be found, and recipients had to be paid temporarily in silver.

As Cyrus is fond of saying, "everything has been said before", and it will not surprise him or his creator that his story is by no means new. One parallel is explicitly invoked. Cyrus has become "a historian or counter-historian" in opposition to the first historian of the west, Herodotus; and his memoirs are, like Herodotus' history, divided into nine books. The narrative of events in Greece and Persia of course derives largely from Herodotus; and Cyrus takes the same attitude to the inviolated intrigues of the Persian royal harem, as he becomes agent and confidant of the two great queens Atossa and Amestris, while his mother Lais orchestrates the Greek exiles with the weapons of seduction and Thracian magic.

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The aged Abbé himself mirrors in reality the fictional Cyrus. Hiding in the house of Cloyneau Choussier in 1792-3, he writes his lonely memoirs: the style of Rousseau's *Confessions*; once keeper of the Royal Library and librarian of the Académie des Inscriptions, the old man knows only that his words can no longer serve as in former times to crown his career, and to ease his successor's first task, the composing of an obituary memoir for the Comptes-rendus of the Académie; for the Académie, like the rest of the Abbé's world, will never exist again. "In this inactivity to which my ill and the course of history condemn me, in an abode where I am the image of the greatest virtues above the image of the greatest vices, I begin in haste and without sorrow, to record the principal circumstances of my life." It is these hidden depths of resonance, as we sense the attempts of succeeding generations to understand their place in history, which give Vidal's often superficial novel its unexpected power. And in old age all men are equal: they must cultivate their gardens.

As the Abbé bids farewell to Anacharsis after six long volumes, he makes him say: "In my youth I sought happiness among the nations of the enlightenment; in old age I have found rest among a people who knows only the benefits of nature." Vidal's vision is of enlightenment as a quest for wisdom, not wisdom; yet his methods are the same. He is exploring the vision of Karl Jaspers, who proclaimed the first millennium BC "the axial age", the age of the great religious insights: Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Ezra and Aeschylus could all have met (at least if we choose our chronology with care). The chief characters in Vidal's novel are not the great religions themselves, but the great religions themselves, as they account towards the east, ignoring the western religious truths. The Greeks are travestied: Pythagoras is mentioned only for his bean tabu; Aeschylus is the author of that lyric play *The Persians*, Socrates a young

the Great King. Though Vidal nowhere gives this vital information, I reckon Cyrus must be on about seventy quarts a day, plus about 150 quarts of flour and a couple of sheep. But no novelist would ever dare to invent the truth about the Persian treasury, where an economic crisis meant that not enough food could be found, and recipients had to be paid temporarily in silver.

As Cyrus is fond of saying, "everything has been said before", and it will not surprise him or his creator that his story is by no means new. One parallel is explicitly invoked. Cyrus has become "a historian or counter-historian" in opposition to the first historian of the west, Herodotus; and his memoirs are, like Herodotus' history, divided into nine books. The narrative of events in Greece and Persia of course derives largely from Herodotus; and Cyrus takes the same attitude to the inviolated intrigues of the Persian royal harem, as he becomes agent and confidant of the two great queens Atossa and Amestris, while his mother Lais orchestrates the Greek exiles with the weapons of seduction and Thracian magic.

Other predecessors Vidal seems less aware. His novel is essentially didactic, a massive enterprise in world education, based on detailed and accurate antiquarian knowledge. It is also permeated with irony, the irony of an eternal outsider, who views all religions from the vantage point of a Zoroastrianism in which he only half believes. Such irony and such irony belong to a different age, to the eighteenth-century enlightenment. For the irony we may compare Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* and their many imitators; for the didacticism the closest parallel is provided by the most famous educational novel of the age, in its day translated into most of the polite languages and now utterly unread, the *Voyage de jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* of the Abbé Barthélémy. Cyrus, grandson of Zoroaster, making the American Grand Tour of the gurus of the East, is a reincarnation of the earnest Anacharsis, descendant of the Scythian sage, who made the same Grand Tour of the sources of the Enlightenment in fourth-century Greece.

and ignorant sophist, Sophocles a middle-aged pederast. Yet it was Sophocles who later wrote for the blind and ageing Oedipus an epitaph fit for Vidal's hero:

Endure what life God gives and ask no longer span;
Cease to remember the delights of youth, travel-wearied aged man;
Delight becomes death-looking if all longing else be vain.

Never to have lived is best, ancient writers say;
Never to have drawn the breath of life, never to have looked into the eye of day;
The second best's a gay goodnight and quickly turn away.

There are two countries that Cyrus has never visited. The first is identified: it is Egypt. Vidal is a true son of the Enlightenment, and like Gibbon, has no interest in "the Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject". The second country is never mentioned: it is Israel. Cyrus is not sent on any embassy to the new Jerusalem, refounded by order of the Great King; he never meets his contemporary courtiers and statesmen, Nehemiah and Ezra; he does not take any hand in the writing of the final version of the Law; of the large Jewish population left in Babylon there is no word. He must surely have seduced Esther, or at least been present at her seduction of the Great King; for his story is closely based on that glorious mixture of court politics, sex and religion which is the Book of Esther. And it is the famous scene at the court of Darius which the three pages in I Ebadra which best distill the message of Gore Vidal: "One wrote 'Wine is strongest', the second wrote 'The king is strongest', and the third wrote 'Women are strongest, but truth conquers all'".

The fact is that behind Vidal's novel lies a failure of nerve: he cannot bring himself to face the real question implicit in a novel about world religions — whether, in the context of all men's search for God, the western religious experience is still meaningful to westerners today. Instead he turns to the east, where it is easy to set the detached unbeliever in our language it is called "whoring after strange gods". And even here there is an unresolved contradiction, between Cyrus the courtier, the ambassador, the intriguer, the secret agent, and Cyrus the seeker after true wisdom: too often the narrative resembles an account of the spiritual quest of an ancient Henry Kissinger. It is no surprise that in the end Vidal finds most to admire in the creed of Confucius, which he portrays as the theology of the ideal civil servant.

In *Firing Squad* (267pp. Secker and Warburg, £5.95) Detective Chief Superintendent Owen Smith, James Barnett's policeman, has just been transferred from the Yard out to suburban London, when there lands on his lap (together with sexy, liberated Woman Detective Sergeant Elstow) the big one: a corpse, tied to a kitchen chair in a sandpit, that appears to have been executed by a military firing squad. From here on, anything goes: James Barnett has let his imagination get the better of him and each twist of the plot takes the book further away from the real towards the surreal. Character-wise, too, Owen's surmounts Pelion: each new arrival is a more eccentric oddball than the preceding. But a good, enjoyable treat for the reader who can suspend giggling pedantry for an hour or two.

David Wise's *Spectrum* (370pp. Allen Lane, £6.50) is really way-out: the head of the CIA threatens not the Russians but his own president with nuclear missiles which he's been squirreling away in secret. Handsome Robert Maynard, head of CIA's London station, seduced by lovely Englishwoman Valerie Kerr, steps in to save the free world from disaster. Plenty of hard facts from the journalist author (though he's surprisingly woozy on London pub customs), which tend to blot out the finer shades of narration: characters bore themselves silly by telling each other what they must already know — this kind of thing gives exposition a bad name.

T.J. Binyon

Familial snares

By Anne Duchêne

ANITA BROOKNER:

A Start in Life
176pp. Cape. £5.95.
0 224 01899 X

What prompts a first novel from a Professor of Art who has already published several books on painting? Some impulse — one first naturally wonders — towards an exquisite experiment in a strange medium? Some determination to push back frontiers which frustrate no one but the ungratefully unappeased author? Why, after all, should anyone whose business has been with the ideal decide to toy with the real?

Anita Brookner, who is such a Professor — Cambridge and Courtauld and all — scotches very robustly the doubts implicit in such questions. For one thing, her writing is healthy and elegant, much given to such observations as that "work is the chosen avocation of those who have no other call on their time" or that her heroine "Ruth, avoided sentiment for she had seen how easy it was to come by"; these observations set off (by a series of Muriel Sparks, as it were) small implusions by which it is agreeable, and even feels salutary, to be bombarded. For another thing, Anita Brookner's story deals very directly and tenderly with a narrow but more or less universal seam of experience, that period in which one is disengaging from one's parents.

Or, in the case of this heroine, attempting to disengage. Ruth as a child "loved her parents passionately and knew them to be unsafe". Ruth at forty, the book's first words tell us, "knew that her life had been ruined by literature". This she attributes to "faulty moral education which dictated, through the conflicting but in this one instance united agencies of her mother and father, that she ponder the careers of Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary, but that she emulate those of David Copperfield and Little Dorrit" — notable prigs, both of them, and Ruth has priggishness thrust upon her by the lethally unregulated institution of the family. Her mother was once so beautiful and so popular an actress that the chilly passage of time quite rapidly

inclines her, from not going out much, to never leaving her bed at all; her father is an amiable impotent, bringing home ready-made suppers from Fortnum's and dreaming wildly of meals that are prepared for him.

Ruth, after a cavernously empty childhood and an unnoticed adolescence, struggles out as far as Fulham first, in her student days. Here she is briefly dazzled by a beautiful modern prig, a young man given up to "caring", but only for hysterics and emotional derelicts who make heavy demands on him; Ruth, being proud and modest, does not score high. Afterwards, in Paris, even adultery seems to elude her, she is just broaching a promising affair with a married professor, anyway, when the collapse of the Middle Ages P's hales her back home.

It is misleading of the author to seem to blame literature for the festering resentments of filial dutifulness. Ruth, moreover, by the time she is forty, has written a book on Balzac's heroines "which would probably do duty for the rest of her life", and is embarking on another book with her publisher's encouragement: a dimension a good many people caught in the family-trap, where "all length is torture", would envy.

A Start in Life is a small, nstringent Bildungsroman, then, with a wobble in the central thesis. This hardly matters, given the confidence of the telling. As well as the arm's-length wit, there is a great deal of precision and perception, including several minor characters — those in Paris are blurred, but in London there is a splendidly contemporary English housekeeper, of democratic blowiness, as little given to seeing distinctions between people as to housekeeping; and a sad little sketch of an ageing actress, alone in Hove, who keeps going on health foods and by thinking well of people. Essentially, though, the book is about the claustrophobic little critical mass of the family, tiny in the sealed tank of home, but sufficient to set off a long chain-reaction of misery and loss. And, in the end, the author pulls her punches, gently: even the poor, pitiable Medusa-figure of the mother dies quite quietly in a taxi. Balzac, of course, did not scorn such happy accidents, himself. But they do somewhat diminish the human, if not the aesthetic, satisfaction of this assured and articulate debut.

THREE RECENT ISSUES IN LUND STUDIES IN ENGLISH

T. S. Eliot

52. MARIANNE THORMÄHLEN, *The Waste Land*.

A Fragmentary Wholeness. 1978. 248 pp. £6.75

Here traditional *Waste Land* puzzles are reconsidered and fresh problems investigated. The undogmatic analysis, while aiming toward clarification, allows for a variety of interpretations, and references to previous *Waste Land* criticisms abound.

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Wilfred Owen

54. SVEN BACKMAN, *Tradition Transformed. Studies in the Poetry of Wilfred Owen*. 1979. 206 pp. £6.25

This book is an attempt to describe the dialect between tradition and innovation in Owen's poetry, as well as his experiments with sound effects.

Samuel Daniel

57. LARS-HAKAN SVENSSON, *Silent Art. Rhetorical and Thematic Patterns in Daniel's Della*. 1980. 389 pp. £10

Arranged as a poem-by-poem commentary, this book aims at a detailed analysis of the rhetorical and thematic patterns in *Della*, while also taking a fresh look at Daniel's intricate assimilation of French and Italian sonneting. For convenience, the 1601 edition of *Della* is reproduced in facsimile.

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A severed head

By Louis Allen

MARGUERITE YOURCENAR:
Mishima ou La Vierge du Vide
125pp. Paris: Gallimard.

"There are two kinds of people," writes Marguerite Yourcenar.

Those who thrust death away from their thoughts so that they can live better and more freely and those who, on the other hand, feel that they exist more easily and strongly the more they lie in wait for it in every signal which sends them through the sensations of their bodies or the hazards of the external world. These two kinds of mind never weld together. What some call a morbid mania is for others a heroic discipline.

The comment comes near the end of her essay on the Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima. There is no doubt which of the two kinds of people she respects more: her essay is a piece of hagiography, not dissimilar in intention to a great deal of the writing of Mishima by Western critics. Many Japanese are either more cynical or more impatient, and would perhaps find Mme Yourcenar's collocation of the sage and tolerant Montaigne with the frenetic and sanguinary author of "Patriotism" somewhat out of place. (That book's Japanese title is, incidentally, "Yūkoku") It is, as she writes it, "Togoku". It is interesting that this gifted patrician — the first woman member of the Académie Française — should publish an essay on the Japanese novelist as a concomitant gesture to the world at large just as she made her entry into that distinguished body some months ago; but not surprising that the essay itself, in spite of its sympathetic analysis of Mishima's writings, should eventually emerge more as biography.

Indeed, this is the problem we will be faced with for a long time to come in relation to Mishima. The life of the man has overtaken the work of the artist, which has become a kind of appendage to the mystery, an answer to the question, why did he do it? A writer obsessed by exhibitionism, voyeurism, homosexuality, sadism, who staged his own violent death by cutting his bowels open in an attempt to get the Japanese Self-Defence Force to rise up against the government, is always likely to overshadow the careful and inventive literary artist. This is a pity, because it is a pity too for other contemporary Japanese novelists who have not turned their lives into such picturesque scripts and who barely get a look in as a result.

Mme Yourcenar devotes a good deal of her essay to an analysis of those of Mishima's writings which she has read in French or English translation. She has also used the very informative biography by Henry Scott Stokes, who was close to Mishima personally. But she uses this literary material to illustrate "the point that there are many years before tragedy to come, many years before, in the writings, that Mishima was not simply impelled to act as he did by a particular political conjuncture, but was living his life according to a fixed plan, in which the often administered *seppuku* would finally step out of the pages of his novels and become reality." So, for instance, when the young Yūichi watches his wife give birth in the novel *Forbidden Colors*, "the bottom of her body seemed to be trying to vomit an image which anticipates the bodily cutting in the short story 'Patriotism', in which the spear abdomen, letting the details escape, seems also to be vomiting."

Mme Yourcenar is also aware of Mishima's faults. As other critics have, she criticizes the use of the theme of reincarnation which runs right through the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility*. These novels centre

round a character, Honda, whose friend Kiyooki died young. Kiyooki is reincarnated in the person of Isao, one of the young men involved in the officers' revolt in Tokyo in 1936, who is in turn reincarnated in the six-year-old "Thai" princess Ying Chan, who hangs on to Honda in 1939 when he is on a business trip to Thailand. She herself is reincarnated as Toru, whom Honda adopts in the final volume.

Mme Yourcenar dismisses this theme as crudely thought out. Like Shūichi Katō, who condemns Mishima's Buddhism as shallow, an appeal to the Western public, and the reincarnation element as absurd, she describes it as a grubbing-up of facts badly welded to the remainder of the novel, "sous formes d'on ne sait quel résumé scolaire citant péle-mêle Pythagore, Empédocle et Campanella". Yet a footnote counsels caution, just as we are about to agree with her. She tells us not to deny parapsychical phenomena out of a conventional inertia, because only attentive observation will make the mystery recede — that mystery which is co-terminous with our ignorance. This footnote wants to have it both ways, to be both sceptical and affirmative.

The problem is that *The Sea of Fertility* cannot dispense with the theme of rebirth, which is integral to the narrative, not added from the outside, however perfunctory Mishima's Buddhist lore may be. And it leads inexorably to the final paragraph of the tetralogy, which provides Mme Yourcenar with her subtitle. The girl Satoko, whom Kiyooki had loved, enters a Buddhist convent. Honda casually comes across the last rebirth, the coastguard Toru, and adopts him, only for Toru, to become a monster who turns against Honda, plots his downfall and humiliates him when he is found in sexually compromising circumstances. But when Honda's old friend Keiko reveals to Toru that what has happened to him is not the result of his own ambition and *finesse* but merely the outcome of Honda's belief that Kiyooki will perpetually re-emerge in other forms, Toru's strength and self-confidence collapse. He fails in his attempt to commit suicide, just three months before his story succeeded in his.

Before his death from cancer, the old Honda visits the convent where Satoko has become an abbess. She casts doubt on his entire plan and denies she has ever met him before. He goes on: "But then if there was no Kiyooki, there was no Isao. No Ying Chan either. Perhaps I myself have never existed?" It is for each one of us to decide that according to his own heart," says the abbess, and she takes him out into the unbacked courtyard of the convent whose walls enclose a splendid but empty sky.

It is no doubt startlingly appropriate that *The Sea of Fertility* should thus debouch on a void on the same day that its author entered the void of eternity. But his typescript, dutifully delivered to the publisher on November 25, 1970 — Mishima always met deadlines — does not tally with what the *seppuku* says. Mishima's suicide was a demonstration, to prove a point. Did he hope by it to rouse the SDF to follow him and the hundred of his Shield Society to the Diet, to proclaim the decadence of Japanese materialism, happy Japan? I don't think so. He had been with the SDF long enough not to be surprised at the jeers which greeted his histrionic performance, carefully advertised to selected journalists the day before. No, Mishima was, presumably, as in the film he derived from "Patriotism", getting for himself. He was, in that supreme moment, not just script-writer, producer and actor, but audience too.

What was the burden of Mishima's complaint against modern Japan? That "money and materialism rule and modern Japan is ugly." That this is untrue is beside the point: it is what drew Mme Yourcenar to him. She has a fondness for conservatism and for ritual, and a preference for obs-

curety in poetry and religion; she is indifferent to modernity and, significantly when speaking of the death of the poet Cavafy (whom she has translated), she uses Mallarméan terms, calling death the moment when the poet liberates himself. There are phrases here also which she learnt from the alchemists when she was pursuing the figure of Zénon for *L'Œuvre au noir*, which recall what Mishima learnt of the primacy of action over ideas from the neo-Confucianism of Wang Yang-mei: not to educate oneself, but to undergo, *ou maitien alla patience*.

Mme Yourcenar knows, of course, that despite Mishima's awareness of the ultimate futility of political ambition, his last acts will not do, in which she evokes the severed heads of Mishima and his lover, posed bloodless and desiccated on the acrylic carpeting of General Masuda's office, "deux ordinateurs arrêtés dans leur tâche". That terrifying image reduces to silence, in her view, all value judgments on the action, moral, political or aesthetic. This is an odd abdication. Those severed heads justify nothing that the living Mishima attempted or did, nor do they silence judgment. We must surely beware of accepting that all martyrdom is valid for whatever cause? Mme Yourcenar in fact seems to sense this, because she moves into a poetic rather than a philosophical conclusion, when the heads become "two pieces of flotsam, borne along by the River of Action, which the huge sea has left for a moment high and dry on the sand, before carrying them off for ever".

The colonel and the dandy

By Lachlan Mackinnon

DAVID MINTER:
William Faulkner
325pp. John Hopkins. £9.50.
0 8018 2347 1

Faulkner was probably the least well-educated novelist of the century, and he came from the paradoxical setting of the most backward region of the most developed nation. Modern literature has tended to be urban; modernism was an affair of cities (Paris, Prague, Vienna, London, New York, Chicago). How Faulkner came to be the major American novelist of his age is therefore an important question, both personally and historically. The great virtue of David Minter's book is that he knows that the question of who a man was is less interesting than that of whom he wished to become. His study of Faulkner is therefore a critical biography, in which the biographical information is arranged around the chronological order of the books, for it is in the poems and the novels that we understand the "self" to which Faulkner aspired.

Minter conventionally, and rightly, takes the view that the shaping influence on Faulkner's life was his great-grandfather, the Old Colonel. This rumbustious character was a Mississippi folk-hero, soldier and tycoon, in an autobiographical note, Faulkner referred particularly to his writings. A deeper fascination with the old man's variety was admitted as, through the Sartoris and Compson families, Faulkner explored what it meant to have had an inadequate father and an overpowering grandfather. Faulkner's love for the re-creating properties was a way of his concern to give property and make himself a gentleman was once a drama of rebellion and away of transcending the material and condescension with which he was generally viewed.

The Old Colonel is one of the

types to whom Faulkner turned for an exemplar: the other was the *fin-de-siècle* dandy whom he imitated in dress and art as a young man. Faulkner's poems are strangled, decadent utterances in which what is to be said is repressed into sheer manner. This side of his character remained present in the novels as the Keatsian vision which lurks behind them all, and whose terms he used to discuss his favourite work, *The Sound and the Fury*.

In *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner invents an urn both for himself and for Caddy, his "heart's darling". Minter properly stresses the significance of Faulkner's discussion of this book, and the crucial way in which Caddy embodies the love and tenderness he sought. Minter is interesting about the way in which Faulkner turned his extra-marital affairs with younger women into re-enactments of the Quentin-Caddy relationship, and concluding about the persistence in Faulkner's psyche of the image of an androgynous, incestuous partner.

Sensibly, Minter does not press too far a suggestive point he makes about the recurrent image of the horror of menstruation in Faulkner's career: sensibly, because he is aware that Faulkner was not unconscious of his psychic disorder. Faulkner's internal divide was not unusual: what was the unique fruitfulness he achieved from deliberately balancing the estate against the householder, and Minter rightly focuses on this.

We are provided here with rather less detail about the actual process of writing than Joseph Blotner had room for in his capacious *Faulkner* (1974). This does not damage his argument, for it is the finished works which most clearly reveal their author and his purpose. Minter is good on the incredible incompetence of publishers faced with these books. Time after time, great stories and novels were rejected outright. But Minter judiciously absolves the publishers from blame for Faulkner's repeated money troubles, which were almost wholly of his own and his wife's making. Faulkner oscillated between extravagance and worry in a

pattern which no funding could last terminated.

It is indeed another echo of the pattern of his life. After each bout of creativity Faulkner sank into almost autistic depression, a state he would never wake again. It was principally at these times that his alcohol problems got out of hand, and Minter makes it clear that behind the problems lay, at least in part, the renewed quest for the Caddy figure, "Little Sister Death". He quotes, for instance, the heartbreaking story of the psychiatrist who, after giving Faulkner the electric shock therapy he accepted, saw him seeking affection and reassurance like a child. Again, Minter suggests with some perspicacity that the long silence during which Faulkner wrestled with a *fin de siècle* period in which he tried to make explicit the implicit moral content of his earlier work, and in doing so robbed them of the perturbations they set up from a more concealed symbolic level.

The one fault in this valuable study is its failure to go further at this point. Hannah Arendt wrote in a footnote to *On Repentance*:

How... guideposts for future reference and remembrance are out of... incessant talk, not to be sure; in the form of concepts but as single brief sentences and condensed aphorisms, may be seen in the novels of William Faulkner. Faulkner's literary procedure, rather than the content of his work, is highly "political": he has remained, as far as I can see, the only author to do it.

In his youth, listening to, collating and rehearsing tales of the Old Colonel, Faulkner learned how a community shapes itself by reference to the past; and how, conversely, the past is inadequately mastered, shaped and deformed the present. The process is public as well as psychological, as well as psychological. Faulkner's true greatness is his engagement with the issue, on both levels, his refusal to allow his work either to invent itself as introspection or to expose itself as public concern.



The first stroke of a Picasso, to be seen developing and changing in a series of photographs included in *Viva Picasso: a Centennial Celebration 1881-1981*, a marvellous record of Picasso living and working: photograph, written, designed and produced by David Douglas Duncan, and published on May 28 (152pp. Allen Lane. £12.95. 0 7139 1420 3).

The therapist at school

By Anthony Storr

DONALD LIGHT:
Becoming Psychiatrists
The Professional Transformation of Self
429pp. Norton. £10.95.
0 393 0168 2

How should psychiatrists be trained? The question is not easy to answer, because the medical speciality of psychiatry includes within its domain so many human problems which do not warrant a medical label, to the solution of which conventional medical training is largely irrelevant. Psychiatrists are concerned with a number of conditions in which definable, organic defect or disease plays a major part. This is true of most varieties of severe mental handicap; of the various forms of pre-senile and senile dementia which afflict our ageing population; of certain varieties of epilepsy and endocrine dysfunction; and of mental disorders brought about by the misuse of drugs and alcohol. In discerning the causes of, and in dealing with, such conditions, conventional medical training is not only essential, but also adequately meets the needs of the patient.

When we turn to consider the major psychoses, schizophrenia and the manic-depressive disorders, the picture becomes a little blurred. Although these conditions are generally treated along conventional medical lines, with drugs, ECT, or other physical methods, definable organic causes are lacking, and social, familial and other psychological factors are recognized as playing an important part in bringing about both improvement and relapse, although their role as primary causal factors is still disputed. But it is in the vast field of the neuroses and so-called "personality disorders" that conventional medical training becomes less and less relevant; and doctors who choose psychiatry as their speciality often find themselves confronted with human problems about which science has nothing to say.

This American account of the training of psychiatrists is written by a doctor who is particularly interested in sociology and the relation between individuals and institutions. Donald Light was himself trained at the University of Chicago, Brandeis, and the Harvard Medical School. Although he

has not always avoided the repetitive verbiage so commonly found in American texts, much of what he has to say is valuable, and he raises problems which those who plan the training of psychiatrists on either side of the Atlantic have not yet solved.

The pattern is gradually changing, but American psychiatric training has traditionally been dominated by the Freudian point of view. In England, it is with the issue of how their own psychological attitudes and personal involvement with the patient may affect his response to psychotherapy. No one who has practised psychotherapy will deny the importance of understanding one's own psychology if one is to be an effective therapist; but it is also true that intense preoccupation with the subjective, both in oneself and in one's patients, is inimical to the objectivity demanded in other situations. When psychiatry becomes psychotherapy and nothing else the capacity for diagnosis and objective observation tends to decline. Concentration on the patient's inner world leads to neglect of his actual behaviour in the external world, and especially to the neglect of reports of his behaviour by those close to him. Light gives an appalling example of a resident making a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia on totally inadequate grounds. The attachment of such a label to anyone may have serious consequences in that they may lose credibility, have difficulty in obtaining employment, or even lose their liberty. Yet, "this residency agnosia was the individual, that the only necessary evidence was the individual's actions and accounts in the presence of the therapist, that one therefore did not normally seek information from nurses, social workers, relatives, attendants or other therapists who worked with the person, and that the individual's relation with the therapist was indicative of his or her major problems".

Doctors entering a difficult field in which they are inexperienced may cling to psychoanalytic doctrine as an emotional prop, which leads to lack of judgment as to when it should be used. Light quotes an anecdote from the psychiatrist Jerome Frank: "As one young psychoanalyst was heard to remark: 'The wonderful thing about psychoanalysis is that even if the patient doesn't get better, you know you are doing the right thing.' One corollary of the psychoanalyst's expectation that his patient should take

the lead in exploring his own problems and be responsible for himself is that the patient is more open to blame if the analysis is unsuccessful. If the patient does not fully reveal himself, or is uncooperative in other ways, or is "manipulative", it is always his own fault; and many psychoanalysts become expert in rationalizing their failures while continuing to take credit for their successes.

As Light recognizes, his book describes the end of an era; and it is certain that psychoanalytically based training will never again be so dominant in American psychiatry as it was between 1940 and 1970. In Britain, we have been faced with the opposite problem, though in recent years, efforts have been made to remedy this defect by appointing "consultant psychotherapists" as participant teachers in training programmes. The likelihood that psychiatry in Britain will ever be so dominated by psychoanalytic thinking and that it will encounter the dangers so vividly described in *Becoming Psychiatrists* is very slight. Nevertheless, a major problem remains on both sides of the Atlantic which Light does not face.

It is highly unlikely that chemical or sociological methods of treatment will ever solve or more than transiently alleviate the kind of emotional problems which, today, so many patients bring to the psychiatrist. These "problems in living", as Thomas Szasz rightly calls them, cannot and should not be labelled "illnesses", and it is doubtful whether they should necessarily be treated by doctors. The practice of psychotherapy does in fact require a different attitude and a different kind of expertise from that demanded in most areas of medical practice; and many of the best psychotherapists are not medically qualified. Freud's original "Project", a "Psychology for Neurologists" in which neurosis could be abandoned in terms of neurones, had to be abandoned. Freud continued to hope that neurosis could be explained deterministically, with ideas or phantasies,

rather than bacteria, trauma, or chemical imbalance acting as causal agents; and this hope, I believe, delayed, rather than advanced, our understanding of neurosis. Psychotherapy is not, and cannot be, a scientifically based procedure in the sense in which a medical treatment can be; for understanding another person is in principle different from understanding a disease. As Isak Dinesen puts it in *Vies and Herders*: "Understanding other men's motives or acts, however imperfect or corrigible, is a state of mind or activity in principle different from learning about, or knowledge of, the external world."

This being so, it is arguable that psychotherapy should be taken out of the hands of doctors, and that psychotherapists should be given an entirely different form of education. For the training which a psychotherapist needs is much more in the area of the humanities than in that of science. A knowledge of philosophy, of comparative religion, of the history of ideas, and of the great novels of the world is far more help in understanding the motives of human beings and what makes their lives worth living than any amount of physiology, anatomy, or biochemistry.

My hope is that, as psychiatry advances, those doubtful areas in which it is uncertain whether biochemical defects like a lack of, or superfluity of, a neural transmitter account for behavioural disturbances will be more clearly defined and treated by psychiatrists. Those emotional problems which remain within the province of the psychotherapist (and they will not be few) will increasingly be recognized as part of the human condition, inseparable from our peculiarities as a species; the inevitable concomitants of our tendency toward alienation from our own bodies and relation with other human beings which cannot be divorced from our capacity for metaphor, symbol, abstraction and innovation.

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448 pages. £16.50



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An early virtuoso

By Michael Hunter

JOHN BOWLE:
John Evelyn and his World
277pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£12.50.
0 7100 0721 3

John Evelyn presents a difficult challenge to any prospective biographer, not least because there are three different facets to his life and writings, each revealed by a separate set of sources. First, there is Evelyn's role in his own day as an intellectual and a fashionable in the culture of "virtu" in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England. John Aubrey summed him up as "one of our first Virtuosi", and this was really his chief contemporary claim to fame, both as an author and as a kind of cultural consultant to the court and the aristocracy. It was also thus that he was remembered for several decades after his death, as is shown by the editions that continued to appear into the eighteenth century of his works on architecture, engraving, silviculture and gardening.

Then there is the *Diary*, first published in 1818, an immediate success which stimulated the first publication of Pepys's diary a few years later. The *Diary* presented a rather different Evelyn to the public, since it makes only passing reference to his other writings. Instead we have here first a travel journal and then a day-to-day view of historical events and courtly

life in England from the 1650s to the early years of the eighteenth century by a pious, prudent and patriotic gentleman, bulked out by self-facing remarks about himself and his family. The *Diary* is a self-portrait, a picture of an upright and public-spirited figure which was much to the taste of the literate of the nineteenth century. Related to it is another work discovered and greatly admired in the nineteenth century, Evelyn's *Life of Mrs Godolphin*, an idealized account of a young lady, Margaret Blagge, who married Sidney Godolphin and with whom Evelyn had a heightened friendship in the 1670s. The subject of this hagiography seemed to Victorian readers a paragon of Victorian femininity.

The problem with both the *Diary* and this *Life* is to know how accurate they are. This is not necessarily to imply that Evelyn actually lied about situations or episodes, but rather that he may have created a slightly artificial image by partial statements on complex matters. Reading between the lines of the *Diary*, Virginia Woolf intimated in an essay of 1920 that Evelyn was rather a bore and perhaps something of a hypocrite. Her scepticism was taken further—very much too far—by W. G. Hoskyns in his *John Evelyn and Mrs Godolphin* (1951) and *John Evelyn and his Family Circle* (1955). Hoskyns tried to collate the *Life* and the *Diary* with a third source of information about Evelyn, the profuse manuscript letters and papers preserved since his time by the Evelyn family. Hoskyns claimed to find there evidence that Evelyn falsified the record about his

relations with Mrs Godolphin, with servants and with members of his family.

Some of Hoskyns's aspersions were unfair and completely unfounded. His account of Evelyn's highly-charged relationship with Margaret Blagge was vitiated by his presumption that all religious sentiments must hypocritically conceal more cynical motives, and in both books too much of his case was based on innuendo rather than proof. But *John Evelyn and his Family Circle* does valuably supplement about Evelyn's domestic and financial affairs and his transactions, with his close relations that, for one reason or another, was not inserted in the *Diary*. The Evelyn papers, which have been on deposit at Christ Church, Oxford, for the past thirty years, undoubtedly provide data on Evelyn which supplements the writings he published himself and those brought out posthumously in the nineteenth century: no serious student of Evelyn would now feel able to ignore them.

John Bowle has not looked at more than a handful of these manuscripts: in his preface he disavows any attempt to make new discoveries, and *John Evelyn and his World* is intended to provide a rounded picture of Evelyn, evidently for the general reader. This is suggested not only by the book's predictable and not especially appropriate title but also by its asides, as for instance where Mr Bowle stops to reflect "how constant many French characteristics have long remained" or to note how "in his mid-sixties, Evelyn, like most elderly

English people in most centuries, was more than ever convinced that England was going to the dogs".

The dust-wrapper boasts that this is "the first biography of John Evelyn to be based not only on the *Diary* but also on a full account of his lesser-known writings", but this is misleading. Bowle's is not the first modern biography to combine information about Evelyn's works with details from the *Diary*: Arthur Ponsonby's book of 1933, for instance, did the same. Nor does it in any sense do justice to Evelyn's preoccupations and achievements as a writer. More than one work is dismissed with words like "save for specialists in 17th-century theology, it is not exciting", and even those dealt with are dispatched with rather patronizing summaries. Furthermore some of Evelyn's most interesting books are not even mentioned, particularly from the 1650s, the most intellectually productive period of his life.

Instead, most of the book comprises a narrative of Evelyn's life and times based on the *Diary*, which is profusely quoted and paraphrased throughout. Personally, I would rather read the *Diary* itself rather than this pedestrian summary with its snatches of background information, but Bowle doubtless understands better than I do the tastes of his likely readers. Hence the book very much reflects the Evelyn of the *Diary*, the proper, self-important minor statesman there depicted: though Bowle makes occasional critical asides, these are not sustained. In addition, however, and particularly towards the end

of the book, he also deploys Hoskyns's findings on Evelyn's domestic affairs and his relations with his family, thereby revealing some of the strains and difficulties that Evelyn experienced. Indeed, more use is made of Hoskyns's work than is acknowledged in the notes, which make it all the more disappointing that Bowle nowhere states where he stands on the aspersions that Hoskyns cast on Evelyn.

Moreover, though in general Bowle swallows whole Evelyn's portrait of himself in the *Diary*, there are prominent themes there which he does as distasteful as Hoskyns did, and it is Evelyn's religion, Bowle is loath to see this as a disagreeable blot on an otherwise benign personality, one of Evelyn's "religious" and "pious" and his "pious and gloomy beliefs". In fact, he makes little or no attempt to understand Evelyn's deep religiosity: it reads more like a secondary source that does more justice to this, they should be at Florence Higham's *John Evelyn Esquire: An Anglican Layman in the 17th Century*, published by the C. M. Press in 1968.

We have here, therefore, a rather superficial and unsatisfactory book which fails to mould together the different facets of Evelyn's life and activities and does not give a very convincing view even of the Evelyn of the *Diary*. It may encourage some general readers to find out more about its subject, but its author can hope for little more than that.

devises for him—*Laudabiliter*—can be no more than an educated guess from a scholar deeply versed in the historical ecology of his theme.

The book remains an interesting piece of social history, for what Richmond is really doing is setting a stage, not very prominent individual in the context of his origins, his family life and the grouping of his friends, neighbours and acquaintances, and her admirably analyzed. Too much attention is devoted to the rather pedestrian material, all for Suffolk. Any relentless pages of analysis, even by the presence of the thousands of resident rabbits who copy like, scampers in and out of accounts, Richmond writes in us to say what John Hopton was not than what he was. Was he a more fifteenth-century Squire Weston? Or a prudent and upright man, as Richmond suggests? At best, the epigraph Richmond

implausible, for it has always been a danger in studying fifteenth-century society that the very wealth of documentation for the fortunes or misfortunes of the Paston family has caused us to regard their experience as typical rather than exceptional. Nevertheless, it remains a pity that Richmond did not attempt to substantiate his hypothesis by further example.

There remains, moreover, something of a hollow centre to the book, for, despite all his efforts, Richmond has been able to add little flesh and blood to the elusive figure of his hero. He is too good a scholar not to admit, on several occasions, that "it is easier to say what John Hopton was not than what he was". Was he a more fifteenth-century Squire Weston? Or a prudent and upright man, as Richmond suggests? At best, the epigraph Richmond

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Unwelcome developments

By Kenneth Mellanby

JOHN SHEALL
Rural Conservation in Inter-War Britain
263pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £16.50.
0 19 825236 5

ROBERT BOARDMAN
International Organisation and the Conservation of Nature
215pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 233 26265 4

Most conservationists in Britain today believe that during the inter-war years there were no effective planning controls regulating changes in the countryside. The belief is reinforced by driving along miles and miles of roads in all parts of the country and finding the view blocked by ribbon development mostly dating from the 1920s and 30s, by visiting enormous areas of characterless suburbia, and by seeing how much of our previously splendid coastline has been desecrated by speculators putting bungalow excrecences, of which Peasehaven is perhaps the most notorious.

Yet there were many people and organisations in these decades who were concerned about preserving Britain, and this book by John Sheall is important, and it does much to set the record straight. While it does not minimize the vandalism which destroyed so much, it describes the way in which opinion changed and legislation was gradually introduced to safeguard at least some of what was left. Measures which were prevented from becoming effective when war broke out in 1939 are shown to have been responsible for much of the success in protecting the countryside in the post-war period.

There were of course planning agencies before 1914. Historic monuments had some protection, at

least in theory, and the Housing, Town Planning Act of 1909 set standards to improve new housing; but the effect of this legislation was also to cover larger and larger areas of prime countryside with buildings. In the years immediately after 1919, with demobilized soldiers returning to a "land fit for heroes", new homes were so badly needed that planning had to take second place. The worst horrors occurred mostly in the 1920s, and did much to awaken public opinion and persuade a reluctant parliament to pass the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act. This gave enlightened local authorities considerable powers, though these were by no means always effectively used.

It is impossible to summarize this long book in a short review. It will be invaluable to students of planning and conservation who wish to know what really happened during the inter-war years. The author has not been daunted by the magnitude of his task. He has studied all the available records, parliamentary papers, archives of all sorts, the private documents of the main protagonists. In most hands this could have been a worthy compilation, required reading for a few students, deadly dull for anyone else—but Mr Sheall has produced a surprisingly readable text. The subject matter is logically arranged in thirteen chapters. After a brief introduction, we have "The Urban Attack", showing how an increasing population and improved transport facilities meant that more people moved into the countryside. We then have a chapter on "Rural Disintegration", which demonstrates how depopulation and a depressed agriculture affected the situation. The remainder of the book deals chapter by chapter, with the ways in which different planning and management problems were dealt with during the period. Sheall's account of the way in which a comparatively small number of men led the field is particularly interesting. John Power and Patrick Abercrombie, for instance, and Gwilym Gibbon and George Pepler, on the government side, helped to put

these ideas into practice. A full complement of lesser "goodies" and "baddies" are also named and their efforts identified. At a more Olympian level, Ramsay MacDonald and Neville Chamberlain obviously cared for the countryside, and were generally on the side of the angels, even though when in high office they had little time to continue the work they had done much to initiate.

In the inter-war period "conservation" meant mainly that of landscape and buildings. Wildlife was less often considered though it was not entirely forgotten. National Parks were to be created to provide facilities for it and Dower wanted "extensive areas to be set aside, as nature reserves". However, it was generally believed that if we protected the farmer and his land, then the flora and fauna would continue to flourish. This was largely true up until 1945, but experience of the latest farming revolution has shown that the situation is rapidly changing. Many now see the farmer as the main enemy of both landscape and wildlife. There is thus an even greater need today for nature reserves, and this brings us to Robert Boardman's book, on nature conservation as an international problem.

Mr Boardman is a political scientist, best known for his studies of foreign policy, particularly in relation to communist China. He has used his expertise here to study the ways in which such bodies as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources operate, with case studies from the Antarctic and the tropics. His book will be valuable to serious students, but others will find it heavy going. The difference between the two volumes considered here is that, though both are scholarly works, John Sheall is clearly an enthusiast for conservation, and communicates this to his readers, while Robert Boardman gives the impression that he is more concerned with the problems of organization than with the welfare of living animals and plants.

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A man of the marshes

By Charles Ross

COLIN RICHMOND:
John Hopton
A Fifteenth Century Suffolk Gentleman
267pp. Cambridge University Press.
£17.50.
0 521 23434 4

Colin Richmond has chosen to write a rather unusual book about a person who may also have been rather unusual, but, if so, more for what he was than for who he was. To devote an entire book to a single Suffolk gentleman, who, apart from his wealth, was not very prominent even in his own lifetime, may at first sight seem a venture of questionable value, the more so because Dr Richmond's hero was, by fifteenth-century standards, very much an anti-hero. John Hopton, esquire, who never bothered to become a knight, was apparently unmoved by any worldly ambition, except in some degree on behalf of his sons. Although twice sheriff of his county, he never sat in parliament either for Suffolk or for a Suffolk borough as might have been expected of a man of his position; and he shirked his proper share in the local government of his county ("work-shy", Richmond labels him). He also evaded any involvement in the divisive politics, both local and national, of his age, which coincided with the Wars of the Roses (he died in 1478). Except in his early years, he was happily free of the spleen and land-hungry litigation which stung so many of his contemporaries. For almost fifty years he was seemingly content to live the life of an independent, if not bucolic landowner from his manor-house at Blythburgh, whose great church still towers over the south-east Suffolk marshes.

John Hopton thus stands far apart from what has come to be regarded as the archetype of "the gentlemen whose aggressive self-confidence, insatiable acquisitiveness and blatant family pride set the tone of English history between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries". A judgement quoted by Richmond at the beginning of his book, it stands out in sharp contrast with the feeding, huddling and nagging passions of nearby Norfolk, whose lives were full of restless violence and petty, deadly enmities, and whose

worldly and thrusting forebears; his grandfather, Sir Robert Swillington, (d. 1391), was chamberlain, councillor and retainer of the mighty John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and a royal retainer also, who accumulated a very substantial landed estate, mainly in Yorkshire, where the exceptionally wealthy manor of Swillington produced more revenue than all the Suffolk estates put together. Richmond, on his own admission, has little to say about this Yorkshire connection, and more might have been said.

All this came to John Hopton in 1430 under a family settlement made eighteen years earlier. John was peculiarly fortunate to inherit; partly because of the unexpected deaths of those above him in the settlement, and also because he came of a bastard line (his grandfather, Joan Hopton, was Sir Robert Swillington's mistress, not his wife).

The watch-dog of Canterbury

By Rosalind Hill

JEFFREY H. DENTON:
Robert Winchelsey and the Crown
1294-1313
A study in the defence of ecclesiastical liberty
341pp. Cambridge University Press.
£17.50.
0 521 22963 4

"They said 'Lord, behold, here are two swords.' And he said unto them: 'It is enough.' Medieval canonists, steeped in the tradition of the Bible, were not content with a simple explanation of the post-war weapons taken by the disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane. To them from the time of Pope Gelasius onwards, the two swords represented the two kinds of authority valid in the Christian world, the power of the church to order men's spiritual lives, and the power of the king to control their temporal affairs. Both were accepted as proper and rightful, and were supposed to be in no real contradiction to each other. As Sir Maurice Powicke wrote: 'The real enemies were the princes and heretics who would not have the same'."

Yet in practice the border-line was notoriously difficult to define. Christianly permeated every aspect of a man's life, but he also did regard for the law of the land. Marriage, in itself one of the seven sacraments, was apt to give rise to complicated lawsuits in the king's courts about inheritance or a widow's claim to her rights of dower. Taxation was essential to the maintenance of the king's government and the defence of his realm, in default of which many of the Christian virtues would hardly be in a position to flourish, but should the clergy pay taxes; and if so, were these to be levied solely upon their temporalities, or should they include also spiritualities? Bishop and king were engaged in a continuous enterprise, the defence of society against the evils of unbelief and barbarism, yet the very nature of their authority made it inevitable that they would be drawn into conflict. At no time were these quarrels more bitter, more complicated or more thoroughly recorded than at the end of the thirteenth century. The fact that they produced no spectacular results such as the murder of Becket was a tribute to the essential moderation of everyone concerned.

Jeffrey H. Denton has studied with great learning the history of one such conflict that between

Robert Winchelsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the English crown. Both Winchelsey and Edward I were hard, single-minded men, and each of them was concerned to uphold justice as he saw it. The issue was complicated by the fact that after 1295 Edward was regarded by a large section of his barons as an oppressive king, who wanted to increase taxation without paying the price in agreeing to respect the limitations imposed upon royal power by Magna Carta, while Winchelsey, although respected as a scholar and a saintly man, was distrusted by the clergy for his support of the king's government, and increasingly ill-supported by a series of popes of whom the last, Clement V, was one of the king's staunchest supporters. Yet in fact no great explosion occurred. Edward did eventually confirm the charter, and his weaker successor, who seems to have had little regard for the sanctity of an oath, at least promised to accept the reforms proposed by the Lords Ordainers, of whom Winchelsey was one. The archbishop himself suffered a period of suspension and exile, but he did at least die in office and in his bed.

Professor Denton's book is an extremely learned contribution to the history of the tangled relations be-

tween Church and Crown. Moreover, in writing it, he has produced a perceptive biography of Winchelsey, a lonely, austere, dedicated man, though not a great constitutionalist in the sense of trying to put back upon the royal power for the good of the realm, was nevertheless an extremely brave man who fought for the rights of the church as he understood them. In sanctity he did not equal Anselm, nor in piety, but he could never be said of him, it was said of his successor, Walter Reynolds, that he was "a dumb dog who did not bark". For the English very good watch-dog indeed, as Professor Denton's book clearly shows.

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Where we belong

By Kim Taplin

RONALD ALTYER (Editor)
Poems
An Anthology of Britain
238pp. Oxford University Press. £7.95.
0 19 211575 8

It is not a pure spirit, and he has lived in the places in which he has lived and experienced joy or sadness. He is bound up with matter, with things, with the ground in *Thomson's* *Seasons*. But he is not bound up with things, as the sense of trying to put back upon the royal power for the good of the realm, was nevertheless an extremely brave man who fought for the rights of the church as he understood them. In sanctity he did not equal Anselm, nor in piety, but he could never be said of him, it was said of his successor, Walter Reynolds, that he was "a dumb dog who did not bark". For the English very good watch-dog indeed, as Professor Denton's book clearly shows.

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"Are men like salmon who, however far they swim in the oceans of the world, are drawn back to the streams where they were born," asks Piers Paul Read. Richard Cobb's extraordinary anatomy of life in his grandparents' house in the Hythe is a spiritual return that he is content to remember. Acceptance characterizes Prufilla Mohanti's piece also, otherwise in sharp contrast: he came with the different vulnerabilities and perceptions of an outsider to be charmed by and then mugged in the East End. Physical exile sharpens and accelerates the process of defining the person. But the sense of the painful longing to return home is part of the human condition. That nostalgia has come to be a pejorative term reflects badly on human nature: the tough-minded have refused to acknowledge the feeling, while the tender-minded have sentimentalized it. Almost everything in this book springs from a proper nostalgia.

If there is loss, there is also possession. For a season. The summer-visiting willow-warblers in a quiet place by Derwent may, who plotted their territories, look like an emblem of it. Some protectiveness of what David Jones once called "know-sell" childhood: Dirk Bogarde, really, child-hood ridden to slugs on Windover Hill, and Clyn Jones calls this place "X". Yet all the contributors have wanted to share, and that is natural, for it is a way to make some return.

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